

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

AHARON STERN on behalf of himself and
all other similarly situated consumers

Plaintiff,

-against-

CENTRAL CREDIT SERVICES LLC

Defendant.

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiff, Aharon Stern, brings this action on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, by way of this Class Action Complaint for the illegal practices of Defendant, Central Credit Services LLC who, inter alia, used false, deceptive, and misleading practices, and other illegal practices, in connection with its attempts to collect an alleged debt from the Plaintiff and others.
2. The Plaintiff alleges that Defendant's collection practices violate the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692, et seq. ("FDCPA").

PARTIES

3. At all times relevant to this lawsuit, Plaintiff was a citizen of the State of New York who resides within this District.
4. Plaintiff is a consumer as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(3) of the FDCPA.
5. The alleged debt that Defendant sought to collect from the Plaintiff involves a consumer debt.

6. At all times relevant to this lawsuit, Defendant's principal place of business was located within Jacksonville, Florida.
7. Defendant is regularly engaged upon, for profit, in the collection of allegedly owed consumer debts.
8. Defendant is a "debt collector" as specifically defined by the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6).

JURISDICTION & VENUE

9. Jurisdiction of this Court arises under 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
10. Venue is appropriate in this federal district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) because a substantial part of the events giving rise to the claims of Plaintiff occurred within this federal judicial district.

FACTS PARTICULAR TO AHARON STERN

11. Upon information and belief, on a date better known by Defendant, Defendant began to attempt to collect an alleged consumer debt from the Plaintiff.
12. Within the one year immediately preceding the filing of this complaint, the Defendant attempted to contact the Plaintiff on multiple occasions via telephone and left numerous messages in an attempt to collect the alleged obligation.
13. The following is an example of one such message that Plaintiff received on or about May 12, 2016:

Name is Roger, callback number is 18003397650, calling from Central Credit Services.
14. At the time Plaintiff received the said messages, he did not know the identity of the callers.
15. At the time Plaintiff received the said messages, he did not know that the call concerned

the collection of a debt.

16. Each of the messages is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2).¹
17. Each of the above messages uniformly failed to identify the callers as debt collectors attempting to collect a debt.
18. The messages left by Defendant was deceptive and harassing per se in that they secreted the identity of the Defendant in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692d(6).
19. Upon information and belief, it is the regular practice of the Defendant to leave messages to be conveyed to 'consumers' which do not meaningfully identify themselves, and/or do not identify themselves as a debt collector.
20. The only way for Plaintiff and/or any least sophisticated consumer to obtain the identity of the caller leaving the messages, and to ascertain the purpose underlying the messages, was to place a return call to the telephone number provided in the messages and speak with a debt collector employed by Central Credit Services LLC, and to provide the debt collector with personal information.
21. The Defendant intended that the messages have the effect of causing Plaintiff, and other least sophisticated consumers, to place return calls to the telephone number provided in the messages and to speak with their debt collectors, and then provide those debt collectors with their personal information, as the sole means of obtaining the identity of the caller leaving the messages, and to ascertain the purpose underlying the messages.
22. Scores of federal court decisions - including the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals and all the District Courts that have considered the issue within the State of New York - (17 decisions to date) uniformly hold that the FDCPA requires debt collectors to provide

¹ Dauval v. MRS BPO, L.L.C., 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 189109, 25 Fla. L. Weekly Fed. D 47 (M.D. Fla. June 27, 2013); Foti v. NCO Fin. Sys., 424 F.Supp.2d 643, 655-56 (S.D.N.Y.2006) (holding that a message with enough information to entice a return call being left with a third party or on a voice mail is a "communication" under the FDCPA).

meaningful identification of itself in messages left for consumers, such as the said messages, by accurately stating the name of the debt collection company and stating the nature and/or purpose of the call.²

23. At all times relevant to this action, Central Credit Services LLC was aware of the substantial weight of legal authority requiring it to provide meaningful identification of itself in messages left for consumers, such as the said messages, by accurately stating the nature and/or purpose of the call.³
24. At all times relevant to this action, Central Credit Services LLC willfully, deliberately, and intentionally chose not to provide meaningful identification of itself in the messages it left for consumers, such as the said messages, by accurately stating the nature and/or purpose of the call.
25. The Defendant's act of leaving the said messages for Plaintiff is conduct the natural consequences of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse a person in connection with the collection of a debt and is in violation of the FDCPA.
26. The Defendant's act of leaving the said messages for Plaintiff constitutes the use of a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection

² *Leyse v. Corporate Collection Servs.*, (2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 67719 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 18, 2006)) (The court followed *Foti*, 424 F. Supp. 2d at 655-56 and *West v. Nationwide Credit*, 998 F. Supp. 642, 644 (W.D.N.C. 1998) in finding that a phone call to a debtor's neighbor that the defendant had a "very important" matter to address was "regarding a debt" because the content of the phone call was "with respect to" the Defendant's efforts to collect on plaintiff's alleged arrearage and since a phone message that "advised the debtor that the matter required immediate attention, and provided a specific number to call to discuss the matter" was a communication under the FDCPA "given that the obvious purpose of the message was to provide the debtor with enough information to entice a return call. The court noted "Were this Court to determine that [the debt collectors] Messages did not constitute communications "regarding [Plaintiff's] debt", the Court would be creating an exception to swallow the rule. Under such an exception, debt collectors would be able to abuse and harass consumers with phone calls and other forms of correspondence so long as there is no express mention of the consumers' debts. The court also found: **"A message left by a debt collector which does not state that it pertains to a financial matter could reasonably pertain to a host of issues - including family or medical matters - which may be viewed by a consumer as much more pressing, than a debt owed. The apparent purpose of these messages is to be vague enough to provoke the recipient to return the calls in haste. Leaving a message that deceptively entices a consumer to communicate with a debt collector when he is caught off guard is precisely the kind of abuse the FDCPA intended to prevent."**) (emphasis added)

³ *Clark v. Capital Credit & Collection Servs.*, 460 F.3d 1162, 1171 (9th Cir. 2006) ("[B]ecause the FDCPA is a remedial statute aimed at curbing what Congress considered to be an industry-wide pattern of and propensity towards abusing debtors, it is logical for debt collectors repeat players likely to be acquainted with the legal standards governing their industry to bear the brunt of the risk."); *Russell v. Equifax A.R.S.*, 74 F.3d 30, 35 (2d Cir. 1996) ("As the Supreme Court has held in the general context of consumer protection—of which the [FDCPA] is a part—it does not seem unfair to require that one who deliberately goes perilously close to an area of proscribed conduct shall take the risk that he may cross the line.") (quoting *FTC v. Colgate-Palmolive Co.*, 380 U.S. 374, 393, 85 S. Ct. 1035, 13 L. Ed. 2d 904 (1965)).

of a debt and is in violation of the FDCPA.

27. The FDCPA secures a consumer's right to have a debt collector cease further communications with the consumer. By failing to meaningfully identify itself, disclose the purpose of its call and state that Central Credit Services LLC is a debt collector in a manner understandable to the least sophisticated consumer, the Defendant has engaged in conduct designed to deprive consumers of their right to have a debt collector cease further communications.
28. It is Defendant's policy and practice to leave messages for consumers with third parties, such as the above said messages, that violate the FDCPA by, inter alia:
 - (a) Failing to provide meaningful disclosure of Central Credit Services LLC's identity;
 - (b) Failing to disclose that the call is from a debt collector; and
 - (c) Failing to disclose the purpose or nature of the communication, i.e. an attempt to collect a debt.
29. Upon information and belief, such messages, as alleged in this complaint, number at least in the hundreds.
30. Upon information and belief, the purpose of these messages is to be vague enough to provoke the recipient to return the calls in haste. A message left by a debt collector which does not state that it pertains to collection of a debt could reasonably pertain to a host of issues – including family or medical matters – which may be viewed by a consumer as much more pressing, than a debt owed. Leaving a message that deceptively entices a consumer to communicate with a debt collector when he is caught off guard is precisely the kind of abuse the FDCPA intended to prevent.

31. A message leaving any information concerning a debt is a "communication." 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2). "Any information" is construed broadly in favor of consumers and includes a callback number or a reference number.⁴
32. It is a communication whether it is from a conversation directly between a consumer and a debt collector or indirectly, such as by a message left on a telephone answering device, or with a third party.⁵
33. Defendant Central Credit Services LLC, failed to provide Plaintiff with the notices required by 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(11), namely, by failing to advise Plaintiff that the communication was from a debt collector or that the Defendant was attempting to collect a debt.⁶
34. Defendant has engaged in a pattern of leaving messages without disclosing that the communication is from a debt collector.
35. The said telephone messages are in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692d(6), 1692e(10) and 1692e(11) for failing to indicate that the messages were from a debt collector which constitutes a deceptive practice.
36. On or about April 27, 2016, Defendant Central Credit Services LLC sent the Plaintiff a collection letter.
37. The said April 27, 2016 letter from Central Credit Services LLC was an effort to collect on a consumer debt.

⁴ Edwards v. Niagara Credit Solutions, Inc., 586 F. Supp. 2d 1346 (N.D. Ga. 2008) aff'd by Edwards v. Niagara Credit Solutions, Inc., 584 F.3d 1350, 2009 U.S. App. LEXIS 22500, 22 Fla. L. Weekly Fed. C 179 (11th Cir. Ga. 2009); Stinson v. Asset Acceptance, LLC, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 42266, *7 (E.D. Va. June 12, 2006).

⁵ West v. Nationwide Credit, Inc., 998 F. Supp. 642, 643 (W.D. N.C. 1998); Foti v. NCO Financial Systems, Inc., 424 F.Supp.2d 643 (S.D.N.Y. 2006) (infra); Wideman v. Monterey Fin. Srvs., Inc., 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 38824 (W.D.Pa May 7, 2009); Belin v. Litton Loan Servicing, LP, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 47953, 2006 WL 1992410, 5 (M.D.Fla., 2006).

⁶ Sclafani v. BC Servs., Inc., No. 10-61360-CIV, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 115330, 2010 WL 4116471, at *3 (S.D. Fla. Oct. 18, 2010) ("If [the defendant] could not leave voice messages that simultaneously complied with the multiple applicable provisions of FDCPA, it should not have left the offending voice messages.")

38. The said collection letter was confusing to the Plaintiff and is likely to be misconstrued by the “least sophisticated consumer” since it is open to more than one reasonable interpretation, at least one of which is inaccurate.

39. The Second Circuit stated in Avila v. Riexinger & Assocs., LLC, 817 F.3d 72, 74 (2d Cir. 2016)

“The question presented is whether a collection notice that states a consumer's "current balance," but does not disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees, complies with this provision. We hold that Section 1692e requires debt collectors, when they notify consumers of their account balance, to disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees.

40. The holding of the Second Circuit is that Section 1692e of the FDCPA requires every debt collector in every collection letter “to disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees”.

41. However, if the “CURRENT BALANCE” will never increase and the holder of the debt will always accept payment of the amount set forth in full satisfaction of the debt then the Second Circuit alternatively stated:

“We hold that a debt collector will not be subject to liability under Section 1692e for failing to disclose that the consumer's balance may increase due to interest and fees if the collection notice *either* accurately informs the consumer that the amount of the debt stated in the letter will increase over time, *or* clearly states that the holder of the debt will accept payment of the amount set forth in full satisfaction of the debt.” *Id.* at 817.

42. The Second Circuit in *Avila* did not “hold that a debt collector must use any particular disclaimer” *Id.*

43. However, the Second Circuit did address all the possible scenarios: 1) If the “current balance” could increase over time, then the collection notice must disclose that the “balance might increase due to interest and fees”. *Id.* 2) If the “current balance” is

currently increasing, then the collection notice must disclose that the amount of the debt stated, “in the letter will increase over time”. *Id.* 3) If the “current balance” will never increase and the debt collector is always willing to accept this “specified amount” in “full satisfaction” of the debt, then the debt collector must state so clearly. However, if a debt collector is willing to accept a “specified amount” in full satisfaction of the debt only if payment is made by a specific date, then the debt collector must simplify the consumer's understanding by so stating, while advising that the amount due could increase by the accrual of additional interest or fees if payment is not received by that date.

44. In this case, the “CURRENT BALANCE” was increasing due to interest per the creditor’s contract. Nevertheless, the collection notice did not disclose that the amount of the debt stated in the letter “could” or “will” increase over time.
45. The Plaintiff, as well as the “least sophisticated consumer” was unsure as to whether or not the said account was accruing interest.
46. The “CURRENT BALANCE” in this case was for an amount that included original principal, fees, and contractual interest.
47. The Plaintiff was left uncertain as to whether the “CURRENT BALANCE” was accruing interest as there was no disclosure that indicated otherwise.
48. The FDCPA requires debt collectors, when notifying consumers of their account balance, to disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees; failure to include such disclosures would harm consumers such as the Plaintiff who may hold the reasonable but mistaken belief, that timely payment will satisfy their debts and it would abrogate the Congressional purpose of full and fair disclosure to consumers that is embodied in Section 1692e.

49. Prior to Defendant Central Credit Services LLC's collection of the said American Express account, the account was previously being collected by Nationwide Credit, Inc., who had also sent a letter to the Plaintiff on or about February 23, 2016.
50. The balance stated in the said February 23, 2016 letter from Nationwide Credit, Inc. was \$13,947.84, and in addition to that balance, interest was accruing daily as evident from the Defendant's April 27, 2016 letter, which reflected an increase in the balance to an amount of \$14,729.48.
51. A reasonable consumer could be misled into believing that he or she could pay his or her debt in full by paying the amount as listed in the April 27, 2016 letter.
52. In fact, however, since as shown by the difference in the amount between the February 23, 2016 letter from Nationwide Credit, Inc., and the new increased amount in the April 27, 2016 letter, which reflected that interest was accruing daily, a consumer who pays the balance due as stated in the letter, would be left unaware as to whether or not the debt has been paid in full.
53. In fact, however, since as shown by the difference in the amount between the February 23, 2016 letter and the new increased amount in the April 27, 2016 letter, which reflected that interest was accruing daily, a consumer who pays the balance due as stated in the letter, would be left unaware as to whether or not the debt has been paid in full.
54. The debt collector could still seek the interest and fees that had accumulated after the notice was sent, but before the balance was paid, or sell the consumer's debt to a third party, who itself could seek the post charge-off interest and fees from the consumer.⁷
55. Where a debt collector mails a debtor various different letters which show that interest is accruing daily, yet the debt collector "is willing to accept a specified amount in full

⁷ See *Avila v. Riexinger & Assocs., LLC*, 817 F.3d 72, 76 (2d Cir. 2016)

satisfaction of the debt if payment is made by a specific date [it must] simplify the consumer's understanding by so stating, while advising that the amount due would increase by the accrual of additional interest or fees if payment is not received by that date.”⁸ However, if the debt collector intended on waiving the interest accruing it must clearly state that the interest is being waived.

56. The said collection letters at issue were increasing daily due to interest, but the April 27, 2016 letter specifically, failed to disclose that the balance would continue to increase due to interest and fees, or in the alternative, the April 27, 2016 letter failed to disclose that the balance was actually not increasing due to the interest being waived.
57. In any event, Defendant’s said April 27, 2016 letter was “misleading” and “confusing” within the meaning of Section 1692e of the FDCPA.

Absent a disclosure by the holder of the debt that the interest accruing since the previous letter is waived, even if the debtor pays the “Amount of Debt” the Defendant and or the creditor could still seek the interest accruing since the previous letter, or sell the consumer’s debt to a third party, which itself could seek the accrued interest from the consumer.⁹

58. Waiver of interest even when it has been made explicitly has not prevented debt-collectors from continuing to illegally charge the waived interest.
59. At the bare minimum, a debt collector must make clear even to the unsophisticated consumer that it intends to waive the accruing post charge-off interest.
60. A debt collector must disclose, that the balance due may change over time.
61. To the extent that the Creditor or the Defendant intended to waive the automatically accrued and accruing interest, it was required to disclose that in the most conspicuous of terms.

⁸ *id.*

⁹ *Avila*, at *10-11.

62. If the “CURRENT BALANCE,” will never increase and the debt collector is always willing to accept this "specified amount" in "full satisfaction" of the debt, then the debt collector must clearly state that the holder of the debt will always accept payment of the amount set forth in “full satisfaction” of the debt.
63. Defendant was required to include a disclosure that the automatically accrued interest was accruing, or in the alternative, the Defendant was required to disclose that the creditor has made an intentional decision to waive the automatically accruing interest and will always accept this "specified amount" in "full satisfaction" of the debt nonetheless it did not make any of those disclosures in violation of 1692e.
64. If interest was waived, the letter would need to contain that disclosure and clearly state that no interest is accruing on this account in order to provide full and fair disclosure to consumers of the actual balance as is embodied in Section 1692e.
65. The Second Circuit adopted a safe harbor disclaimer stating "that requiring such disclosure best achieves the Congressional purpose of full and fair disclosure to consumers that is embodied in Section 1692e. It also protects consumers such as the Plaintiff, who may hold the reasonable but mistaken belief that timely payment will satisfy their debts."¹⁰
66. Because the statement of the “CURRENT BALANCE” that included original principal, fees, and contractual interest, without notice that the accruing interest was expressly waived can mislead the least sophisticated consumer into believing that payment of the amount stated will clear her account, the FDCPA requires debt collectors, when they notify consumers of their account balance, to expressly disclose that the amount of the debt stated in the letter will increase over time, *or* clearly state that the holder of the debt

¹⁰ Avila v. Riexinger & Assocs., LLC, 817 F.3d 72, 76 (2d Cir. 2016)

will always accept payment of the amount set forth in full satisfaction of the debt. Id. at 817.

67. Requiring such disclosure best achieves the Congressional purpose of full and fair disclosure to consumers that is embodied in Section 1692e. It also protects consumers such as the Plaintiff, who may hold the reasonable, but mistaken belief that timely payment will satisfy their debts and it protects them from other debt collectors seeking further interest on this debt in the future.
68. According to the Second Circuit's finding that the "CURRENT BALANCE" must contain a full and fair disclosure, if a credit card account was being charged interest, pursuant to a contract and the interest was intended to be waived, disclosure of such a waiver is necessary or the consumer would not know what the balance is. "[i]n fact, however, if interest is accruing daily, [or was not expressly waived] a consumer who pays the 'current balance' stated on the notice will not know whether the debt has been paid in full. The debt collector could still seek the [accruing or unwaived] interest and fees that accumulated after the notice was sent but before the balance was paid, or sell the consumer's debt to a third party, which itself could seek the interest and fees from the consumer."¹¹
69. The 8th Circuit in Haney v. Portfolio Recovery Assocs., No. 15-1932, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 17287 (8th Cir. Sep. 21, 2016) clearly explains that merely not including interest in post charge off statements is not express waiver of interest, and the debt collector or creditor can seek the interest in the future.
70. In fact, in this case the Plaintiff is still not sure whether there was any intent to waive the interest. There was definitely no express waiver and disclosure of waiver is mandatory

¹¹ Avila v. Riexinger & Assocs., LLC, 817 F.3d 72, 76 (2d Cir. 2016)

if interest was originally accruing per the contract. The consumer could not know what the real balance is.

71. The intent to waive a contractual right must be unmistakably manifested and may not be inferred from doubtful or equivocal acts.¹² A waiver of a contract right does not occur by negligence, oversight or thoughtlessness and cannot be inferred from mere silence.¹³
72. Failure to disclose such a waiver of the automatically accruing interest is in of itself deceptive and “misleading” within the meaning of Section 1692e. The Defendant knew that the balance would increase due to interest, fees and/or disbursements.
73. According to the Second Circuit in *Avila*, any debt that was accruing interest and fees would need full and complete disclosure which would either clearly state that the balance “may” or “will” increase over time or clearly state that the debt is “static” and holder of the debt will always accept payment of the amount set forth in “full satisfaction” of the debt.
74. The “CURRENT BALANCE” is for an amount that includes original principal, fees, and contractual interest.
75. Since interest was accruing on this debt, the collection notice must inform the consumer that the amount of the debt stated in the letter may increase over time.
76. Collection letters failing to reference the accrual of interest or waiver of interest are subject to two different interpretations as to the accumulation of interest, rendering them deceptive under § 1692e(10).
77. “None of the letters provided further detail regarding when or how the balance had been

¹² *Navillus Tile, Inc. v. Turner Const. Co.*, 2 A.D.3d 209, 770 N.Y.S.2d 3 (1st Dep’t 2003).

¹³ *Acumen Re Management Corp. v. General Sec. Nat. Ins. Co.*, 2012 WL 3890128, at *6 (S.D. N.Y. 2012), reconsideration denied, motion to certify appeal granted, 2012 WL 6053936 (S.D. N.Y. 2012).

calculated, whether it included interest, or whether interest continued to accrue. The court finds that the "least sophisticated consumer" could have read these letters in at least two different ways. *On one hand*, an unsophisticated consumer could reasonably conclude that the balance was a fixed amount that would not be subject to further interest, late fees, or other charges. *On the other*, an unsophisticated consumer could just as reasonably determine that the balance would continue to grow over time as interest accrued. *One of those meanings would necessarily be inaccurate.* Therefore, the court finds that Defendants' letters were deceptive as a matter of law. Courts in other districts have reached the same conclusion on similar facts. The court grants Ms. Snyder's motion for summary judgment on this issue.” *Snyder v. Gordon*, No. C11-1379 RAJ, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 120659, at *8-9 (W.D. Wash. Aug. 24, 2012); *Avila v. Riexinger & Assocs., LLC*, 817 F.3d 72, 75 (2d Cir. 2016) (“[I]n considering whether a collection notice violates Section 1692e, we apply the "least sophisticated consumer" standard...**Under this standard, a collection notice is misleading if it is "open to more than one reasonable interpretation, at least one of which is inaccurate."**”)

78. “The Court therefore finds that [the debt collectors] letters to [the debtor] are subject to two different interpretations as to the accumulation of interest, rendering them deceptive under § 1692e(10) ... The logic [applies] to stated outstanding debt and the need for consumers to be aware that this debt may be dynamic or static. They are concerned with a consumer's inability to discern whether an amount owed may grow with time, regardless of whether offers to settle are on the table or not. As [plaintiff] states, this information is relevant in a consumer's payment calculus, especially when some debts must be paid at the expense of others. And, of course, the existence of settlement offers would be entirely

irrelevant to these considerations for the many consumers who are unable to take advantage of them...Plaintiff's claim is not that the stated balance was not itemized, but that it was unclear whether it was subject to future interest.” Michalek v. ARS Nat'l Sys., No. 3:11-CV-1374, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 142976, at *16-17 (M.D. Pa. Dec. 13, 2011).

79. The Plaintiff and the least sophisticated consumer could conclude from the said collection letter, that the “CURRENT BALANCE” is static and that his or her payment of the amount due would satisfy the debt irrespective of when payment was remitted. However, absent a disclosure by the holder of the debt that clearly stated that the holder of the debt would accept payment of the amount set forth in “full satisfaction” of the debt then even if the debtor pays the “CURRENT BALANCE” the Defendant and or the creditor could still seek the automatic interest that accumulated after the breach of contract, or sell the consumer’s debt to a third party, which itself could seek the automatic interest and from the consumer. (Avila, at *10-11.)
80. The said April 27, 2016 letter was deceptive and misleading as it merely identified the “CURRENT BALANCE,” yet failed to disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees.
81. The Plaintiff was left uncertain as to whether the “CURRENT BALANCE” was accruing interest as there was no disclosure that indicated otherwise.
82. A reasonable consumer could read the notice and be misled into believing that he or she could always pay his or her debt in full by paying the amount listed on the notice.
83. In fact, however, since interest is accruing daily, or since there are undisclosed late fees, a consumer who pays the “CURRENT BALANCE” stated on the notice will not know whether the debt has been paid in full.

84. The debt collector could still seek the interest and fees that accumulated after the notice was sent but before the balance was paid, or sell the consumer's debt to a third party, which itself could seek the interest and fees from the consumer.
85. The statement of a "CURRENT BALANCE" without notice that the amount is already increasing due to accruing interest or other charges, would mislead the unsophisticated consumer into believing that payment of the amount stated will clear his or her account.
86. The FDCPA requires debt collectors, when notifying consumers of their account balance, to disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees; failure to include such disclosures would harm consumers such as the Plaintiff who may hold the reasonable but mistaken belief, that timely payment will satisfy their debts and it would abrogate the Congressional purpose of full and fair disclosure to consumers that is embodied in Section 1692e.
87. Collection notices that state only the "CURRENT BALANCE," but do not disclose that the balance might increase due to interest and fees, are "misleading" within the meaning of Section 1692e.
88. The Plaintiff and the least sophisticated consumer would be led to believe that the "CURRENT BALANCE" is static and that his or her payment of the amount due would satisfy the debt irrespective of when payment was remitted.
89. A consumer who pays the "CURRENT BALANCE" stated on the collection letter will be left unsure as to whether or not the debt has been paid in full, as the Defendant could still attempt to collect on any interest and fees that accumulated after the letter was sent but before the balance was paid.
90. The Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A) for misrepresenting the amount of the

debt owed by the Plaintiff.

91. A debt collector, when notifying a consumer of his or her account balance, must disclose that the balance may increase due to interest and fees.

92. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e provides:

A debt collector may not use any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt. Without limiting the general application of the foregoing, the following conduct is a violation of this section:

(2) The false representation of –
the character, amount, or legal status of any debt; or

(10) the use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt or to obtain information concerning a consumer.

93. Defendant's April 27, 2016 letter is in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(A) and 1692e(10) of the FDCPA for the use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt and for misrepresenting the amount of the debt owed by the Plaintiff.

94. Plaintiff suffered injury in fact by being subjected to unfair and abusive practices of the Defendant.

95. Plaintiff suffered actual harm by being the target of the Defendant's misleading debt collection communications.

96. Defendant violated the Plaintiff's right not to be the target of misleading debt collection communications.

97. Defendant violated the Plaintiff's right to a truthful and fair debt collection process.

98. Defendant used materially false, deceptive, misleading representations and means in its attempted collection of Plaintiff's alleged debt.

99. Defendant's communications were designed to cause the debtor to suffer a harmful disadvantage in charting a course of action in response to the Defendant's collection efforts.
100. The FDCPA ensures that consumers are fully and truthfully apprised of the facts and of their rights, the act enables them to understand, make informed decisions about, and participate fully and meaningfully in the debt collection process. The purpose of the FDCPA is to provide information that helps consumers to choose intelligently. The Defendant's false representations misled the Plaintiff in a manner that deprived him of his right to enjoy these benefits, these materially misleading statements trigger liability under section 1692e of the Act.
101. These deceptive communications additionally violated the FDCPA since they frustrate the consumer's ability to intelligently choose his or her response.
102. Plaintiff seeks to end these violations of the FDCPA. Plaintiff has suffered damages including but not limited to, fear, stress, mental anguish, emotional stress and acute embarrassment. Plaintiff and putative class members are entitled to preliminary and permanent injunctive relief, including, declaratory relief, and damages.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

103. This action is brought as a class action. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of himself and on behalf of all other persons similarly situated pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
104. With respect to the Plaintiff's Class, this claim is brought on behalf of a class of; (a) all persons in the State of New York; (b) for whom Central Credit Services LLC left a message, (c) that did not identify that the call was for collection purposes; (d) made in

connection with Central Credit Services LLC's attempt to collect a debt; (e) which the said messages violate the FDCPA; (f) during a period beginning one year prior to the filing of this initial action and ending 21 days after the service of the initial complaint filed in this action.

105. The identities of all class members are readily ascertainable from the records of Central Credit Services LLC and those business and governmental entities on whose behalf it attempts to collect debts.
106. Excluded from the Plaintiff's Class is the Defendant and all officers, members, partners, managers, directors, and employees of Central Credit Services LLC, and all of their respective immediate families, and legal counsel for all parties to this action and all members of their immediate families.
107. There are questions of law and fact common to the Plaintiff's Class, which common issues predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issues are whether the Defendant's messages, such as the above said messages, violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692d(6), 1692e(10), and 1692e(11).
108. The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories.
109. The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Plaintiff's Class defined in this complaint. The Plaintiff has retained counsel with experience in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions, and neither the Plaintiff nor his attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.

110. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because there is a well-defined community interest in the litigation:

- (a) **Numerosity:** The Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that the Plaintiff's Class defined above is so numerous that joinder of all members would be impractical.
- (b) **Common Questions Predominate:** Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Plaintiff's Class and those questions predominate over any questions or issues involving only individual class members. The single issue of whether class members received phone messages that lacked information required by the FDCPA is common to the class members and predominates over any individual issue. The exact script of the messages need not be common to the class members, since it is the lack of information that is relevant.¹⁴ The principal issues are whether the Defendant's messages, such as the above said messages violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692d(6), 1692e(10), and 1692e(11).
- (c) **Typicality:** The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members. Plaintiff and all members of the Plaintiff's Class defined in this complaint have claims arising out of the Defendant's common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
- (d) **Adequacy:** The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiff has no interests that are adverse to the absent class members. The Plaintiff is committed to vigorously litigating

¹⁴ Hicks v. Client Servs., Inc., 2008 WL 5479111, at *7 (S.D. Fla. Dec. 11, 2008).

this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiff nor his counsel have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.

- (e) **Superiority:** A class action is superior to the other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy because individual joinder of all members would be impracticable. Class action treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum efficiently and without unnecessary duplication of effort and expense that individual actions would engender. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(1)(A) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is appropriate because adjudications with respect to individual members create a risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications which could establish incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant who, on information and belief, collects debts throughout the United States of America.

111. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that a determination that the said messages violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692d(6), 1692e(10), and/or 1692e(11) is tantamount to declaratory relief and any monetary relief under the FDCPA would be merely incidental to that determination.
112. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that the questions of law and fact common to members of the Plaintiff's Class predominate over any questions affecting an individual member, and a

class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.

113. Depending on the outcome of further investigation and discovery, Plaintiff may, at the time of class certification motion, seek to certify one or more classes only as to particular issues pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act brought by the Plaintiff

114. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered one (1) one hundred and thirteen (113) herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
115. This cause of action is brought on behalf of Plaintiff and the members of two classes.
116. The first class involves all individuals whom Defendant's records reflect resided in the State of New York who received telephonic messages from Defendant within one year prior to the date of the within complaint up to the date of the filing of the complaint; (a) the telephone call was placed to a the consumer's home or similar party seeking payment of a consumer debt by leaving a message for the Plaintiff; and (b) the Plaintiff asserts that the telephone message was in violation 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692e, 1692e(10), 1692e(11), and 1692f.
117. The second class involves all individuals whom Defendant's records reflect resided in the State of New York and who were sent a collection letter in substantially the same form letter as the letter sent to the Plaintiff on or about April 27, 2016; and (a) the collection letter was sent to a consumer seeking payment of a personal debt; and (b) the collection letter was not returned by the postal service as undelivered; and (c) the Plaintiff asserts

that the letter contained violations of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(A) and 1692e(10) of the FDCPA for the use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt and for misrepresenting the amount of the debt owed by the Plaintiff.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, respectfully requests that this Court enter a judgment in Plaintiff's favor as against the Defendant and award damages as follows:

- (a) Statutory and actual damages provided under the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. 1692(k);
- (b) Attorney fees, litigation expenses and costs incurred in bringing this action;
- (c) Any other relief that this Court deems appropriate under the circumstances.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York
April 5, 2017

/s/ Maxim Maximov
Maxim Maximov, Esq.
Attorneys for the Plaintiff
Maxim Maximov, LLP
1701 Avenue P
Brooklyn, New York 11229
Office: (718) 395-3459
Facsimile: (718) 408-9570
E-mail: m@maximovlaw.com

Plaintiff requests trial by jury on all issues so triable.

/s/ Maxim Maximov
Maxim Maximov, Esq.